

The Soul and the World

How I came to treasure the sanctity of the non-commercial.

I was 17 in 1970. I sent a package of my artwork to DC Comics in New York to get an opinion on the possibility of a career for me as a comic illustrator.

I had read somewhere, possibly in Jim Steranko's History of Comics, that the movie Citizen Kane had exerted a great influence upon comic artists in the golden age. Accordingly I was experimenting with unusual angles of view in my panels.

The package I sent to DC included my pencil re-drawing of a story from either the House of Secrets or the House of Mystery. The story had originally been published with beautiful artwork by Alex Toth. I re-drew the entire story, panel by panel, using unusual angles. In one panel a character that Alex Toth had drawn from a front view at eye level I transformed into a weird view looking up at the character from the floor.

DC were very nice. They realised that I was only a teenager so they returned my artwork with a nice note telling me that, yes, I did have talent but that I needed experience. This was undoubtedly true.

They also encouraged me by saying that they would be happy to see any more of my work that I wished to send to them.

As you can imagine, I was very pleased.

However, the more I thought about a career in commercial art the more I realised that, for a person like me, whose brain is always bubbling with loads of ideas, commercial art would be a nightmare of boredom. Drawing the same things over and over and over again. Superman standing on a rooftop, Superman flying through the air, Superman landing on a rooftop, Superman punching a monster. Endless repetition, day in, day out, drawing the same things or very slight variations of them. I realised that that would be hellish.

It was from that moment onward that I began to have an almost monastic sense of the need to keep The Soul in one part of my life and The World in a different part.

Of course, I was very much influenced by Christianity, Buddhism and the Hare Krishna people. The feeling that the soul or spirit is in here, in the heart and that "The World" is out there where we go to earn a living.

This feeling of keeping the soul separate from the world of money has continued throughout my life. This is why I always maintain a strongly non-commercial status for my artwork and writing. When I worked for a living I preferred to work in jobs which didn't infringe upon my art. To do things this way. **It simply feels right.**